

PRODUCT Spotlight

By Ian Faight



Photos by Landrum Tables

Furniture makers turn to southern cypress

OVER THE PAST two years, homeowners and their families have spent a lot of time at home—living, working, and learning. So it's no surprise that furniture sales have been on the rise, despite the pandemic and economic conditions. And while less expensive pieces may be tempting, homeowners are researching and investing in quality furniture crafted from real wood, like cypress, that will provide a lifetime of service.


"Cypress has long been known for its durability in outdoor applications, but it's an extremely versatile species as well," says Cassie Lewis from Turn Bull Lumber Co. in Elizabethtown, N.C. "It's a beautiful wood and offers a distinct look with its color range and grain pattern, making it a solid choice for interior uses and furniture that's built to last."

Custom furniture maker Capers L. Cauthen, owner of Landrum Tables in Charleston, S.C., agrees. "As an artist and a craftsman, I want to create custom tables for families that they'll enjoy for years to come," he adds. "Solid wood furniture is durable and—with proper care—will last forever. And it can be repaired, refinished, and brought back to life many times over. On the other hand, run-of-the-mill pieces made from medium-density fiberboard (MDF) or particleboard aren't built for long-term use. Their surface has one life and if it gets wet or is used in the wrong environment, it'll easily get damaged or fall apart, and the whole piece will need to be replaced."

While Cauthen works with a number of species, he's particularly fond of cypress. "I don't just offer cypress furniture, I recommend it," he says.

"I grew up in Charleston, surrounded by history, old homes, architecture, and design. Cypress is a prominent building material here and I prefer working with it for a number of reasons. First, it is a very stable wood that performs well in our humid climate. It doesn't seem to check or split like pine. And I take extra precautions to dry it properly if I'm shipping furniture to drier climates, like up north.

"Cypress also is naturally durable. I use a lot of river recovered cypress in my work and tell my clients that any wood that can last 400 or more years on the bottom of a river or swamp is something you can bank on and have confidence in. And in my experience, cypress also is bug proof, it resists decay, and it isn't affected by the elements like some other species."

Cauthen also offers some simple care and maintenance tips. "I suggest people stay away from using a mixture of vinegar and water. Vinegar has acidic properties that may break down materials over time. Instead, I tell my clients to simply wipe down their furniture with a lightly damp cloth and then dry it after. And with regular cleaning, your furniture will look great for years to come." 

—For more on information on southern cypress and how it's being used to craft furniture, visit Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association at cypressinfo.org and follow @cypress_info on Instagram.